



## **Final Response**

**ATIPP Request #** 23-079

**Source of Records:** Deputy Minister's Office  
Issues Management Unit

**Health and Social Services**

# Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

### Daily Issues (March 7, 2023)

Health and Social  
Services

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#### Media coverage:

- Questions were raised about the government's plan to clear the backlog of physician claims and improve access to primary care.
- Questions were raised about the Nursing Recruitment and Retention bonuses and whether nurses on leave will become eligible for those bonuses.
- Questions were raised about conducting a classification review for Registered Midwives. A motion was also tabled requesting the department conduct a quality assurance review of the Midwifery Program.
- Questions were raised about whether the Yukon Dental Program will provide Yukoners with private insurance with a top-up to match coverage offered through the program.
- Questions have been raised about whether the government will fund prescription contraceptives.
- Yukoners and Members of Legislative Assembly have requested updates on when fertility treatments will be covered through Medical Travel.
- There may be some interest in Housing First initiatives.
- There is interest in funding to respond to the Substance Use Health Emergency in the 2023-24 Budget.

#### Contraceptives:

- British Columbia has announced it will become the first jurisdiction to provide free prescription coverage for contraception.
- Coverage for birth control is currently available to youth enrolled in the Children's Drug and Optical Program, which is available to lower-income families with children 18 years of age and younger.

# Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

### Daily Issues (March 7, 2023)

Health and Social  
Services

---

- Birth control is covered for social assistance recipients by Income Support Services.
- The Yukon Sexual Health Clinic also provides a variety of conception control products to clients of clinic.
- Our government is committed to supporting Yukoners in accessing sexual and reproductive health, and gender-affirming care, and will continue to explore options to expand access to birth control.
- The development of a new program will first require careful planning, research, and engagement with Yukoners and partners from across the health system.

### Fertility Treatments:

- In 2021, our government committed to expanding the support available to Yukoners undergoing fertility treatments such as subsidies to offset the cost of treatments.
- We are excited to be building on these commitments in the 2023 *Confidence and Supply Agreement* by including fertility treatment in medical travel and to creating a refundable tax rebate for fertility treatments by 2025.
- Implementing initiatives of this magnitude will require significant work and take time to develop as we conduct necessary regulatory and legislative assessments and amendments.
- We are currently in the planning stages and are not yet in a position to provide specific information on what this program will look like, including details such as eligibility or coverage.

# Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

**Daily Issues  
(March 7, 2023)**

Health and Social  
Services

---

### Housing First:

- Housing First is a philosophy and program approach. Its goal is to permanently house Yukon's most vulnerable people by shifting to a low-barrier, high-support model of service delivery.
- We are committed to a Housing First approach to ensure the most vulnerable in our community can access stable homes.
- It is an approach focused on empathy and compassion.
- Every Yukoner deserves to have access to a safe and affordable home.
- Housing First is an approach that reduces barriers such as sobriety or receiving treatment.
- We have committed to working closely with our partners to advance a range of treatment, harm reduction, prevention, and awareness initiatives in response to the substance use health emergency.
- Over the next 24 months, we expect to see new additions to housing with services for vulnerable Yukoners.
- There are already 57 supportive housing units available in Whitehorse operating under Housing First principles.
- I would like to thank our many community partners for their commitment to ending and preventing homelessness in the territory.
- We will continue to promote initiatives which meet the supportive housing and temporary shelter needs of vulnerable Yukoners.
- Additional information, TAB 57. "Housing and Homelessness."

### Midwifery:

- The recent temporary suspension of the Yukon Midwifery Program is the result of staffing challenges due to the local, global, and national shortages of healthcare workers we are facing.

# Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

### Daily Issues (March 7, 2023)

Health and Social  
Services

---

- Despite these staffing challenges, the Yukon Midwifery Program was carefully and strategically developed to address gaps in the previous system and to provide an accessible, safe, and positive experience for all clients.
- We continue to work with local and national partners to address the local, global, and national shortages of healthcare currently impacting the Yukon Midwifery Program and to ensure the program is fully integrated into our health system and offers high quality and safe care for all Yukoners.
- As with any new program, the Yukon Midwifery Program relies on a robust quality improvement process to conduct ongoing assessments and implement adaptations in response to these assessments as needed.
- A robust quality improvement process has been a priority for the Yukon Midwifery Program throughout its development and on an ongoing basis. The program and workflow processes were developed and continue to be reviewed with the input of local and national experts including registered midwives, nurses, physicians, Yukon First Nations.
- We are committed to ensuring that the Yukon Midwifery Program reflects the best standards of care and reflects the unique realities of the Yukon context.
- We recognize the competitiveness of the compensation rates for registered midwives across the country and their impacts on our ability to successfully recruit and retain new midwives.
- The Department of Health and Social Services and the Public Service Commission are working together to explore options to bring the remuneration rates for Registered Midwives working in the Yukon in line with other parts of the country.
- Additional information, TAB 21. "Midwifery."

### Nursing Bonus:

## Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

### Daily Issues (March 7, 2023)

### Health and Social Services

---

- Over the next two years, retention and recruitment bonuses will be provided to Registered Nurses, Nurse Practitioners, and Licensed Practical Nurses, who are in a position requiring a nursing designation and performing nursing duties for the Government of Yukon as of December 1, 2022.
- This new bonus package serves to address the wage gap we face with other Canadian jurisdictions, and helps us with the ongoing recruitment and retention challenges we are facing by creating tools to effectively attract and retain staff to serve our communities.
- We understand that some of our nursing staff have raised questions about the administration of these allowances. This has been brought to the attention of the Department of Health and Social Services, who is working closely with the Public Service Commission to respond to these concerns as quickly as possible.
- The administration of these bonuses is consistent with our delivery of other compensable allowances outlined in the Collective Agreement.
- Like the other compensable allowances for nurses, the recruitment and retention bonuses are based on work performed.
  - Employees who are on leave without pay but return during the specified period of time to qualify for any bonuses will receive a prorated amount for the time they are actively performing in a position that requires a nursing designation.

### Physician Claims and Access to Primary Care:

- Ensuring that physicians are paid within an appropriate timeframe is a priority for our government and our physician community.
- In January, a backlog of physician claims was identified. We have taken immediate action to address these concerns and are working to resolve these outstanding claims as quickly as possible.

# Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

### Daily Issues (March 7, 2023)

Health and Social  
Services

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- In some cases, claims may require manual assessment or additional information may be required from the provider.
- We appreciate the opportunity to work collaboratively with the Yukon Medical Association to identify short and long-term options to enhance the physician claims and payment system moving forward.
- Our government continues to explore new ways to increase access to primary health care services, including:
  - Opening the Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre;
  - Negotiating a new Memorandum of Understanding with the Yukon Medical Association, which has made the Yukon one of the most desirable places to practice medicine and will increase access to primary health care through its Attachment and Attraction program;
  - Expanding the scope of practice of Pharmacists;
  - Increasing access to Nurse Practitioners across the Yukon;
  - Working to open a new medical walk-in clinic as outlined in the 2023 Confidence and Supply Agreement.
- We are working with our health system partners and other levels of government to respond to the health human resource crisis. This fiscal year, we have budgeted **\$2M** to enhance the recruitment and retention of new health care professionals.
  - This includes **\$500K** (\$500,000) to develop a cross-sectoral health human resources strategy.
  - **Related information, TAB 8. "Physicians."**

# Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

**Daily Issues  
(March 7, 2023)**

Health and Social  
Services

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### Safe at Home and High Country Inn:

- Our government appreciates the ongoing work done by the Safe at Home Society to end and prevent homelessness in our territory.
- Starting in February 2023, the Safe at Home Society began providing short-term supportive housing at 4051 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, the former Coast High Country Inn, to alleviate the pressures of homelessness faced by vulnerable Yukoners. This is expected to be complete by the end of the week of March 6, 2023.
  - The Transfer Payment Agreement was signed on February 15 with budget and expectation to fill 20 units (bachelor suites)
  - This agreement is temporary until June 30
  - The cost for in 2022-23 is \$476,352 and there is \$340,252 budgeted in 2023-24.
- This initiative aligns with their goal to provide permanent supportive housing at this site in the future.
- We will continue to work with the Safe at Home Society and other partners on new, innovative ways to address homelessness in our community.
- Conversations are ongoing between the Department and Safe at Home Society to explore the supports and services, which may be required for future tenants in these supportive housing units.
- Related information, TAB 62. "Housing and Homelessness"

### Substance Use Health Emergency Funding:

- The Substance Use Health Emergency is a territory-wide challenge that cannot be solved alone, which is why we are working with our partners to coordinate our response.
- As we work with our partners, we are also making significant investments to respond to this crisis.

# Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

### Daily Issues (March 7, 2023)

### Health and Social Services

---

- In 2021-22, our government provided an initial **\$1M** to launch the Supervised Consumption Site in fall 2022.
- During the 2022-23 fiscal year, our government provided a temporary increase of **\$3.4M** to assist with our response to the Substance Use Health Emergency, which included:
  - **\$1.798M** for Mental Wellness and Social Supports in response to the Substance Use Health Emergency;
  - **\$122K** in Mental Wellness bilateral funding;
  - **\$397K** for new nursing positions within Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services and Community Nursing;
  - **\$193K** in additional funding for the Supervised Consumption Site;
  - **\$856K** for Safer Supply; and,
  - **\$55K** for new Substance Use and Addictions Programs.
- This additional funding for the Substance Use Health Emergency complimented our established and ongoing Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services' funding, which was budgeted as **\$25.3M** during the 2022-23 fiscal year.
- During the 2023-24 fiscal year, we have budgeted **\$25.7M** for Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services. We have also moved to permanently integrated some of the temporary supports introduced during the 2022-23 fiscal year into our routine programming.
- Through this permanent integration of **\$660K** for 6.0 FTEs in Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services, we are ensuring that the Yukon remains prepared to respond to the Substance Use Health Emergency and meet the mental wellness needs of Yukoners moving forward.
- The overall budget for Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services is being used to deliver a variety of programs across our Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services Community Hubs as well as our Whitehorse based programs. This funding is also used to support land-based healing initiatives, support the new Car 867, support an opioid overdose prevention

# Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

### Daily Issues (March 7, 2023)

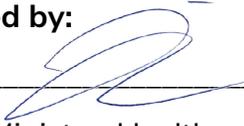
Health and Social  
Services

team, make Naloxone available across the Yukon, and to fund several NGO partners, including Blood Ties Four Directions.

- Additionally, we also provide funding to psychiatrists and local physicians who service the Referred Care Clinic, as well as provide medical travel coverage to access some pre-approved out-of-territory mental wellness and substance use services at approved facilities.
- In 2023-24, our government has provided \$12.2M to the Yukon Hospital Corporation's construction of a new Mental Wellness Unit (Short Stay Psychiatric Unit / Secure Medical Unit).
- Additional information, TAB 10. "Substance Use Health Emergency."

### Yukon Dental Program:

- The Yukon Dental Program officially launched on January 4, 2023, providing \$1,300 per year in dental benefits to eligible Yukoners.
- This exciting new program aims to fill gaps in our current programs and provide more Yukoners with access to essential dental care.
- Pharmacare and Extended Health Benefits clients can receive \$600 through the Yukon Dental Program in addition to the \$1,400 available every two years through the Pharmacare and Extended Health Benefits program.
- Yukoners with private dental insurance are not eligible to receive a top up at this time.
- Related information, TAB 29. "Dental."

<b>Approved by:</b>	
	March 7, 2023
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services	[Date approved]
	March 7, 2023
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services	[Date approved]

# Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

### Daily Issues (March 8, 2023)

Health and Social  
Services

---

#### Media coverage:

- Questions were raised about the end of the current agreement with Second Opinion Society and how the situation is similar to Many Rivers.
- Questions were raised about how the Attachment and Attraction Program will be implemented and made accessible.
- Questions were raised about improving access to physician services for medical exams for Class 4 Driver's Licenses.
- Questions were raised about funding for Prenatal Nutrition Programs to meet rising food costs.
- There is interest in the status of processing outstanding physician claims.

#### Attachment and Attraction:

- Included in the three-year agreement with the Yukon Medical Association, is the new Attachment and Attraction program that will work to increase Yukoners' access to primary and specialty care, while supporting physicians' operating costs.
- The Attachment and Attraction program will provide incentives for Yukon physicians to expand their patient rosters, which we anticipate will reduce the number of Yukoners without access to a primary care provider.
- The program will offer funding for overhead costs to physicians who meet a minimum care delivery standard of patients and appointments. Family doctors who spend more days in clinic will have access to more overhead funding for each additional half day they see patients.
- For patients of participating family doctors, this means increased access to care and the availability of same-day, unscheduled appointments.
- We also anticipate this new program will help to attract new physicians to the territory.

## Session Briefing Note

Spring 2023

Daily Issues  
(March 8, 2023)

Health and Social  
Services

---

- The program is presently fully up and running with participating physicians while the department and the Yukon Medical Association continue to respond to enquiries as with any new program.
- The Government of Yukon continues to explore physician payment models as part of the implementation of the *Putting People First* report.
- We are committed to continuing to work with the Yukon Medical Association to implement the agreement and to continue to build a health care system that provides Yukoners with access to the right provider, at the right location, and at the right time.
- While this is an exciting and innovative new program, it is only one of the steps we are taking to improve the delivery of healthcare in the Yukon.
- **Related information, TAB 8. "Physicians."**

### Contraceptives:

- British Columbia has announced it will become the first jurisdiction to provide free prescription coverage for contraception.
- Coverage for birth control is currently available to youth enrolled in the Children's Drug and Optical Program, which is available to lower-income families with children 18 years of age and younger.
- Birth control is covered for social assistance recipients by Income Support Services.
- The Yukon Sexual Health Clinic also provides a variety of conception control productions to clients of clinic.
- Our government is committed to supporting Yukoners in accessing sexual and reproductive health, and gender-affirming care, and will continue to explore options to expand access to birth control.
- The development of a new program will first require careful planning, research, and engagement with Yukoners and partners from across the health system.

# Session Briefing Note

# Spring 2023

## Daily Issues (March 8, 2023)

Health and Social  
Services

---

### Fertility Treatments:

- In 2021, our government committed to expanding the support available to Yukoners undergoing fertility treatments such as subsidies to offset the cost of treatments.
- We are excited to be building on these commitments in the 2023 Confidence and Supply Agreement by including fertility treatment in medical travel and to creating a refundable tax rebate for fertility treatments by 2025.
- Implementing initiatives of this magnitude will require significant work and take time to develop as we conduct necessary regulatory and legislative assessments and amendments.
- We are currently in the planning stages and are not yet in a position to provide specific information on what this program will look like, including details such as eligibility or coverage.

### Housing First:

- Housing First is a philosophy and program approach. Its goal is to permanently house Yukon's most vulnerable people by shifting to a low-barrier, high-support model of service delivery.
- We are committed to a Housing First approach to ensure the most vulnerable in our community can access stable homes.
- It is an approach focused on empathy and compassion.
- Every Yukoner deserves to have access to a safe and affordable home.
- Housing First is an approach that reduces barriers such as sobriety or receiving treatment.
- We have committed to working closely with our partners to advance a range of treatment, harm reduction, prevention, and awareness initiatives in response to the substance use health emergency.

## Session Briefing Note

Spring 2023

**Daily Issues  
(March 8, 2023)**

Health and Social  
Services

---

- Over the next 24 months, we expect to see new additions to housing with services for vulnerable Yukoners.
- There are already 57 supportive housing units available in Whitehorse operating under Housing First principles.
- I would like to thank our many community partners for their commitment to ending and preventing homelessness in the territory.
- We will continue to promote initiatives which meet the supportive housing and temporary shelter needs of vulnerable Yukoners.
- Additional information, TAB 57. "Housing and Homelessness."

### Medical Exams for Driver's Licenses:

- The *Health Care Insurance Plan Act* indicates examinations related to employment, industrial, or insurance purposes are non-insured services.
- Our government continues to work with partners to improve access to our health system as a whole.
- This includes our new Memorandum of Understanding with the Yukon Medical Association, which includes innovative initiatives such as an Attachment and Attraction program to attract physicians to the Yukon, and increase access to primary care.

### Midwifery:

- The recent temporary suspension of the Yukon Midwifery Program is the result of staffing challenges due to the local, global, and national shortages of healthcare workers we are facing.
- Despite these staffing challenges, the Yukon Midwifery Program was carefully and strategically developed to address gaps in the previous system and to provide an accessible, safe, and positive experience for all clients.

# Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

### Daily Issues (March 8, 2023)

Health and Social  
Services

---

- We continue to work with local and national partners to address the local, global, and national shortages of healthcare currently impacting the Yukon Midwifery Program and to ensure the program is fully integrated into our health system and offers high quality and safe care for all Yukoners.
- As with any new program, the Yukon Midwifery Program relies on a robust quality improvement process to conduct ongoing assessments and implement adaptations in response to these assessments as needed.
- A robust quality improvement process has been a priority for the Yukon Midwifery Program throughout its development and on an ongoing basis. The program and workflow processes were developed and continue to be reviewed with the input of local and national experts including registered midwives, nurses, physicians, Yukon First Nations.
- We are committed to ensuring that the Yukon Midwifery Program reflects the best standards of care and reflects the unique realities of the Yukon context.
- We recognize the competitiveness of the compensation rates for registered midwives across the country and their impacts on our ability to successfully recruit and retain new midwives.
- The Department of Health and Social Services and the Public Service Commission are working together to explore options to bring the remuneration rates for Registered Midwives working in the Yukon in line with other parts of the country.
- **Additional information, TAB 21. “Midwifery.”**

### Nursing Bonus:

- Over the next two years, retention and recruitment bonuses will be provided to Registered Nurses, Nurse Practitioners, and Licensed Practical

## Session Briefing Note

Spring 2023

Daily Issues  
(March 8, 2023)

Health and Social  
Services

---

Nurses, who are in a position requiring a nursing designation and performing nursing duties for the Government of Yukon as of December 1, 2022.

- This new bonus package serves to address the wage gap we face with other Canadian jurisdictions, and helps us with the ongoing recruitment and retention challenges we are facing by creating tools to effectively attract and retain staff to serve our communities.
- We understand that some of our nursing staff have raised questions about the administration of these allowances. This has been brought to the attention of the Department of Health and Social Services, who is working closely with the Public Service Commission to respond to these concerns as quickly as possible.
- The administration of these bonuses is consistent with our delivery of other compensable allowances outlined in the Collective Agreement.
- Like the other compensable allowances for nurses, the recruitment and retention bonuses are based on work performed.
  - Employees who are on leave without pay but return during the specified period of time to qualify for any bonuses will receive a prorated amount for the time they are actively performing in a position that requires a nursing designation.

### Physician Claims and Access to Primary Care:

- Ensuring that physicians are paid within an appropriate timeframe is a priority for our government and our physician community.
- In January, a backlog of physician claims was identified. We have taken immediate action to address these concerns and are working to resolve these outstanding claims as quickly as possible.
- In some cases, claims may require manual assessment or additional information may be required from the provider.

# Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

### Daily Issues (March 8, 2023)

Health and Social  
Services

---

- As of March 8, 2023, Insured Health Services has paid over \$1M towards physician claims and is making a concentrated effort to reduce the number of claims that are over 60 days old.
- Our team is committed to ensuring that payments are made promptly and efficiently to physicians.
- We appreciate the opportunity to work collaboratively with the Yukon Medical Association to identify short and long-term options to enhance the physician claims and payment system moving forward.
- Our government continues to explore new ways to increase access to primary health care services, including:
  - Opening the Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre;
  - Negotiating a new Memorandum of Understanding with the Yukon Medical Association, which has made the Yukon one of the most desirable places to practice medicine and will increase access to primary health care through its Attachment and Attraction program;
  - Expanding the scope of practice of Pharmacists;
  - Increasing access to Nurse Practitioners across the Yukon;
  - Working to open a new medical walk-in clinic as outlined in the 2023 Confidence and Supply Agreement.
- We are working with our health system partners and other levels of government to respond to the health human resource crisis. This fiscal year, we have budgeted \$2M to enhance the recruitment and retention of new health care professionals.
  - This includes \$500K (\$500,000) to develop a cross-sectoral health human resources strategy.
  - Related information, TAB 8. "Physicians."

# Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

**Daily Issues  
(March 8, 2023)**

Health and Social  
Services

---

### **Prenatal Nutrition funding:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to building upon the eight Canada Prenatal Nutrition Programs, expanding access to prenatal care, and ensuring that vulnerable women and infants have access to prenatal services by identifying opportunities to establish new supports in the future.
- In 2021-22, we matched federal funding of **\$677K** (\$677,000) to support the existing Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program in the Yukon. Funding is matched on an ongoing basis and supports the eight programs currently operating in the territory.
- Canada Prenatal Nutrition Programs operate in the following communities:
  - Carcross: Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies
  - Dawson City: Healthy Families, Healthy Babies
  - Teslin: Teslin Prenatal Program
  - Watson Lake: Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies
  - Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre - Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies
  - Teen Parent Centre Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program
  - Skookum Jim Friendship Centre Prenatal Nutrition Program
  - Les EssentiElles.
- These programs support families and assist in setting the foundation for strong, healthy families and communities.
- Additionally, in 2022-23 we provided the Council of Yukon First Nations **\$262K** (\$262,000), which was used to research and identify Yukon First Nations prenatal and infant support needs in rural communities, as well as to fill a position to assist with Yukon First Nations prenatal and infant supports.
- In 2021, the Yukon government formed a Prenatal Advisory Group to identify needs and best practices related to providing prenatal and infant supports for expectant people and families.

## Session Briefing Note

Spring 2023

Daily Issues  
(March 8, 2023)

Health and Social  
Services

---

- The group includes representatives from the Government of Yukon, Crown-Indigenous Relations Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Council of Yukon First Nations.
- The Government of Yukon has provided \$175K (\$175,000) in financial support to the Network for Healthy Early Human Development Yukon for the 2022-23 fiscal year.
- This funding matches the federal funding that Network for Healthy Early Human Development Yukon receives through the Community Action Program for Children.
- The funding has strengthened Network for Healthy Early Human Development Yukon's ability to deliver the Partners for Children program to Yukon families with young children.
- The Partners for Children program provides a variety of services to promote healthy childhood development, including parenting groups, workshops, trainings, and support for child care centers.
- A new funding request is under review by the department.

### Safe at Home and High Country Inn:

- Our government appreciates the ongoing work done by the Safe at Home Society to end and prevent homelessness in our territory.
- Starting in February 2023, the Safe at Home Society began providing short-term supportive housing at 4051 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, the former Coast High Country Inn, to alleviate the pressures of homelessness faced by vulnerable Yukoners. This is expected to be complete by the end of the week of March 6, 2023.
  - The Transfer Payment Agreement was signed on February 15 with budget and expectation to fill 20 units (bachelor suites)
  - This agreement is temporary until June 30

## Session Briefing Note

Spring 2023

Daily Issues  
(March 8, 2023)

Health and Social  
Services

---

- The cost for in 2022-23 is \$476,352 and there is \$340,252 budgeted in 2023-24.
- This initiative aligns with their goal to provide permanent supportive housing at this site in the future.
- We will continue to work with the Safe at Home Society and other partners on new, innovative ways to address homelessness in our community.
- Conversations are ongoing between the Department and Safe at Home Society to explore the supports and services, which may be required for future tenants in these supportive housing units.
- Related information, TAB 62. "Housing and Homelessness"

### Second Opinion Society:

- We recognize the essential contributions of non-governmental organizations to Yukoners and are committed to supporting these partners and the work they do.
- Our government provides funding through Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services to several non-governmental organization who provide variety of important mental health services to Yukoners.
- This previously included the Second Opinion Society whose current Transfer Payment Agreement will expire as of March 31, 2023.
- While the Department of Health and Social Services will not be renewing the current agreement, we have been meeting with the Second Opinion Society to explore future partnership options with a revised programming model.
- We remain committed to working with the Second Opinion Society and to supporting them through the process of developing an updated proposal that ensures appropriate services and programming are made available to residents of the Yukon.

## Session Briefing Note

Spring 2023

Daily Issues  
(March 8, 2023)

Health and Social  
Services

---

- We continue to work collaboratively with organizations such as Blood Ties Four Directions, Opportunities Yukon, Connective, and the Canadian Mental Health Association – Yukon to provide Yukoners with health and social care.

### Substance Use Health Emergency Funding:

- The Substance Use Health Emergency is a territory-wide challenge that cannot be solved alone, which is why we are working with our partners to coordinate our response.
- As we work with our partners, we are also making significant investments to respond to this crisis.
- In 2021-22, our government provided an initial **\$1M** to launch the Supervised Consumption Site in fall 2022.
- During the 2022-23 fiscal year, our government provided a temporary increase of **\$3.4M** to assist with our response to the Substance Use Health Emergency, which included:
  - \$1.798M for Mental Wellness and Social Supports in response to the Substance Use Health Emergency;
  - \$122K in Mental Wellness bilateral funding;
  - \$397K for new nursing positions within Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services and Community Nursing;
  - \$193K in additional funding for the Supervised Consumption Site;
  - \$856K for Safer Supply; and,
  - \$55K for new Substance Use and Addictions Programs.
- This additional funding for the Substance Use Health Emergency complimented our established and ongoing Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services' funding, which was budgeted as **\$25.3M** during the 2022-23 fiscal year.
- During the 2023-24 fiscal year, we have budgeted **\$25.7M** for Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services. We have also moved to

# Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

### Daily Issues (March 8, 2023)

### Health and Social Services

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permanently integrated some of the temporary supports introduced during the 2022-23 fiscal year into our routine programming.

- Through this permanent integration of **\$660K** for 6.0 FTEs in Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services, we are ensuring that the Yukon remains prepared to respond to the Substance Use Health Emergency and meet the mental wellness needs of Yukoners moving forward.
- The overall budget for Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services is being used to deliver a variety of programs across our Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services Community Hubs as well as our Whitehorse based programs. This funding is also used to support land-based healing initiatives, support the new Car 867, support an opioid overdose prevention team, make Naloxone available across the Yukon, and to fund several NGO partners, including Blood Ties Four Directions.
- Additionally, we also provide funding to psychiatrists and local physicians who service the Referred Care Clinic, as well as provide medical travel coverage to access some pre-approved out-of-territory mental wellness and substance use services at approved facilities.
- In 2023-24, our government has provided **\$12.2M** to the Yukon Hospital Corporation's construction of a new Mental Wellness Unit (Short Stay Psychiatric Unit / Secure Medical Unit).
- **Additional information, TAB 10. "Substance Use Health Emergency."**

### Yukon Dental Program:

- The Yukon Dental Program officially launched on January 4, 2023, providing \$1,300 per year in dental benefits to eligible Yukoners.
- This exciting new program aims to fill gaps in our current programs and provide more Yukoners with access to essential dental care.

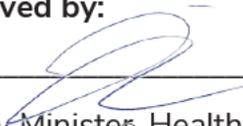
# Session Briefing Note

# Spring 2023

## Daily Issues (March 8, 2023)

## Health and Social Services

- Pharmacare and Extended Health Benefits clients can receive \$600 through the Yukon Dental Program in addition to the \$1,400 available every two years through the Pharmacare and Extended Health Benefits program.
- Yukoners with private dental insurance are not eligible to receive a top up at this time.
- Related information, TAB 29. "Dental."

<b>Approved by:</b>	
 _____	March 8, 2023 _____
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services	[Date approved]
 _____	March 8, 2023 _____
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services	[Date approved]

# Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

### Daily Issues

**(March 9, 2023)**

Health and Social  
Services

---

#### Media coverage:

- A motion was tabled urging the department to allow midwives to provide services in private practices, to ensure the pay for Yukon midwives is competitive with other jurisdictions, and to revisit our decision to temporarily suspend the program and our health and safety standards regarding on-call staff.

#### Attachment and Attraction:

- Included in the three-year agreement with the Yukon Medical Association, is the new Attachment and Attraction program that will work to increase Yukoners' access to primary and specialty care, while supporting physicians' operating costs.
- The Attachment and Attraction program will provide incentives for Yukon physicians to expand their patient rosters, which we anticipate will reduce the number of Yukoners without access to a primary care provider.
- The program will offer funding for overhead costs to physicians who meet a minimum care delivery standard of patients and appointments. Family doctors who spend more days in clinic will have access to more overhead funding for each additional half day they see patients.
- For patients of participating family doctors, this means increased access to care and the availability of same-day, unscheduled appointments.
- We also anticipate this new program will help to attract new physicians to the territory.
- The program is presently fully up and running with participating physicians while the department and the Yukon Medical Association continue to respond to enquiries as with any new program.
- The Government of Yukon continues to explore physician payment models as part of the implementation of the *Putting People First* report.

# Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

### Daily Issues

**(March 9, 2023)**

Health and Social  
Services

---

- We are committed to continuing to work with the Yukon Medical Association to implement the agreement and to continue to build a health care system that provides Yukoners with access to the right provider, at the right location, and at the right time.
- While this is an exciting and innovative new program, it is only one of the steps we are taking to improve the delivery of healthcare in the Yukon.
- Related information, TAB 8. "Physicians."

### Contraceptives:

- British Columbia has announced it will become the first jurisdiction to provide free prescription coverage for contraception.
- Coverage for birth control is currently available to youth enrolled in the Children's Drug and Optical Program, which is available to lower-income families with children 18 years of age and younger.
- Birth control is covered for social assistance recipients by Income Support Services.
- The Yukon Sexual Health Clinic also provides a variety of conception control productions to clients of clinic.
- Our government is committed to supporting Yukoners in accessing sexual and reproductive health, and gender-affirming care, and will continue to explore options to expand access to birth control.
- The development of a new program will first require careful planning, research, and engagement with Yukoners and partners from across the health system.

# Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

### Daily Issues

**(March 9, 2023)**

Health and Social  
Services

---

#### Fertility Treatments:

- In 2021, our government committed to expanding the support available to Yukoners undergoing fertility treatments such as subsidies to offset the cost of treatments.
- We are excited to be building on these commitments in the 2023 Confidence and Supply Agreement by including fertility treatment in medical travel and to creating a refundable tax rebate for fertility treatments by 2025.
- Implementing initiatives of this magnitude will require significant work and take time to develop as we conduct necessary regulatory and legislative assessments and amendments.
- We are currently in the planning stages and are not yet in a position to provide specific information on what this program will look like, including details such as eligibility or coverage.

#### Housing First:

- Housing First is a philosophy and program approach. Its goal is to permanently house Yukon's most vulnerable people by shifting to a low-barrier, high-support model of service delivery.
- We are committed to a Housing First approach to ensure the most vulnerable in our community can access stable homes.
- It is an approach focused on empathy and compassion.
- Every Yukoner deserves to have access to a safe and affordable home.
- Housing First is an approach that reduces barriers such as sobriety or receiving treatment.
- We have committed to working closely with our partners to advance a range of treatment, harm reduction, prevention, and awareness initiatives in response to the substance use health emergency.

# Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

### Daily Issues

**(March 9, 2023)**

Health and Social  
Services

---

- Over the next 24 months, we expect to see new additions to housing with services for vulnerable Yukoners.
- There are already 57 supportive housing units available in Whitehorse operating under Housing First principles.
- I would like to thank our many community partners for their commitment to ending and preventing homelessness in the territory.
- We will continue to promote initiatives which meet the supportive housing and temporary shelter needs of vulnerable Yukoners.
- Additional information, TAB 57. "Housing and Homelessness."

### Medical Exams for Driver's Licenses:

- The *Health Care Insurance Plan Act* indicates examinations related to employment, industrial, or insurance purposes are non-insured services.
- Our government continues to work with partners to improve access to our health system as a whole.
- This includes our new Memorandum of Understanding with the Yukon Medical Association, which includes innovative initiatives such as an Attachment and Attraction program to attract physicians to the Yukon, and increase access to primary care.

### Midwifery:

#### Staffing

- The recent temporary suspension of the Yukon Midwifery Program is the result of staffing challenges due to the local, global, and national shortages of healthcare workers we are facing.

# Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

### Daily Issues

**(March 9, 2023)**

Health and Social  
Services

---

- Despite these staffing challenges, the Yukon Midwifery Program was carefully and strategically developed to address gaps in the previous system and to provide an accessible, safe, and positive experience for all clients.
- We continue to work with local and national partners to address the local, global, and national shortages of healthcare currently impacting the Yukon Midwifery Program and to ensure the program is fully integrated into our health system and offers high quality and safe care for all Yukoners.

### Quality Assessment

- As with any new program, the Yukon Midwifery Program relies on a robust quality improvement process to conduct ongoing assessments and implement adaptations in response to these assessments as needed.
- We are committed to ensuring that the Yukon Midwifery Program reflects the best standards of care and reflects the unique realities of the Yukon context.
- The Yukon Midwifery Program policies, practice protocols and quality improvement processes were developed and continue to be reviewed with the input of local and national experts including registered midwives, nurses, physicians, Yukon First Nations.

### Health and Safety Standards

- The Yukon Midwifery Program's health and safety standards are guided by the Yukon Midwives Regulation, which we take very seriously.
- Complying to these standards ensures we can provide 24/7 coverage and the highest quality care to Yukoners.

# Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

### Daily Issues

**(March 9, 2023)**

Health and Social  
Services

---

- Currently, we do not have the full staffing resources available to achieve this, which has contributed to the decision to temporarily pause midwifery-led births.
- This is a challenge faced by many midwifery programs across this country regardless of the model of service delivery.
- At the centre of this decision, is the health, safety, and wellness of Yukoners.

### Private Clinics

- There are no simple solutions to resolving the current challenges faced by the midwifery program.
- The Yukon Midwifery Program was developed with input from local and national experts, including the Canadian Association of Midwives, is based on significant research, and is in line with national standards of midwifery care.
- These experts recommended that the Government of Yukon transition away from unregulated services to ensure patient safety and to fill the gaps in care under the previous system.

### Compensation

- We recognize the competitiveness of the compensation rates for registered midwives across the country and their impacts on our ability to successfully recruit and retain new midwives.
- The Department of Health and Social Services and the Public Service Commission are working together to explore options to bring the remuneration rates for Registered Midwives working in the Yukon in line with other parts of the country.
- **Additional information, TAB 21. "Midwifery."**

# Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

### Daily Issues

**(March 9, 2023)**

Health and Social  
Services

---

#### Nursing Bonus:

- Over the next two years, retention and recruitment bonuses will be provided to Registered Nurses, Nurse Practitioners, and Licensed Practical Nurses, who are in a position requiring a nursing designation and performing nursing duties for the Government of Yukon as of December 1, 2022.
- This new bonus package serves to address the wage gap we face with other Canadian jurisdictions, and helps us with the ongoing recruitment and retention challenges we are facing by creating tools to effectively attract and retain staff to serve our communities.
- We understand that some of our nursing staff have raised questions about the administration of these allowances. This has been brought to the attention of the Department of Health and Social Services, who is working closely with the Public Service Commission to respond to these concerns as quickly as possible.
- The administration of these bonuses is consistent with our delivery of other compensable allowances outlined in the Collective Agreement.
- Like the other compensable allowances for nurses, the recruitment and retention bonuses are based on work performed.
  - Employees who are on leave without pay but return during the specified period of time to qualify for any bonuses will receive a prorated amount for the time they are actively performing in a position that requires a nursing designation.

#### Physician Claims and Access to Primary Care:

- Ensuring that physicians are paid within an appropriate timeframe is a priority for our government and our physician community.

# Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

### Daily Issues

**(March 9, 2023)**

Health and Social  
Services

---

- In January, a backlog of physician claims was identified. We have taken immediate action to address these concerns and are working to resolve these outstanding claims as quickly as possible.
- In some cases, claims may require manual assessment or additional information may be required from the provider.
- As of March 8, 2023, Insured Health Services has paid over \$1M towards physician claims and is making a concentrated effort to reduce the number of claims that are over 60 days old.
- Our team is committed to ensuring that payments are made promptly and efficiently to physicians.
- We appreciate the opportunity to work collaboratively with the Yukon Medical Association to identify short and long-term options to enhance the physician claims and payment system moving forward.
- Our government continues to explore new ways to increase access to primary health care services, including:
  - Opening the Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre;
  - Negotiating a new Memorandum of Understanding with the Yukon Medical Association, which has made the Yukon one of the most desirable places to practice medicine and will increase access to primary health care through its Attachment and Attraction program;
  - Expanding the scope of practice of Pharmacists;
  - Increasing access to Nurse Practitioners across the Yukon;
  - Working to open a new medical walk-in clinic as outlined in the 2023 Confidence and Supply Agreement.
- We are working with our health system partners and other levels of government to respond to the health human resource crisis. This fiscal year, we have budgeted **\$2M** to enhance the recruitment and retention of new health care professionals.
  - This includes **\$500K** (\$500,000) to develop a cross-sectoral health human resources strategy.

# Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

### Daily Issues

**(March 9, 2023)**

Health and Social  
Services

---

- Related information, TAB 8. “Physicians.”

#### **Prenatal Nutrition funding:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to building upon the eight Canada Prenatal Nutrition Programs, expanding access to prenatal care, and ensuring that vulnerable women and infants have access to prenatal services by identifying opportunities to establish new supports in the future.
- In 2021-22, we matched federal funding of **\$677K** (\$677,000) to support the existing Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program in the Yukon. Funding is matched on an ongoing basis and supports the eight programs currently operating in the territory.
- Canada Prenatal Nutrition Programs operate in the following communities:
  - Carcross: Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies
  - Dawson City: Healthy Families, Healthy Babies
  - Teslin: Teslin Prenatal Program
  - Watson Lake: Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies
  - Victoria Faulkner Women’s Centre - Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies
  - Teen Parent Centre Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program
  - Skookum Jim Friendship Centre Prenatal Nutrition Program
  - Les EssentiElles.
- These programs support families and assist in setting the foundation for strong, healthy families and communities.
- Additionally, in 2022-23 we provided the Council of Yukon First Nations **\$262K** (\$262,000), which was used to research and identify Yukon First Nations prenatal and infant support needs in rural communities, as well as to fill a position to assist with Yukon First Nations prenatal and infant supports.

## Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

### Daily Issues

**(March 9, 2023)**

Health and Social  
Services

---

- In 2021, the Yukon government formed a Prenatal Advisory Group to identify needs and best practices related to providing prenatal and infant supports for expectant people and families.
- The group includes representatives from the Government of Yukon, Crown-Indigenous Relations Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Council of Yukon First Nations.
- The Government of Yukon has provided **\$175K** (\$175,000) in financial support to the Network for Healthy Early Human Development Yukon for the 2022-23 fiscal year.
- This funding matches the federal funding that Network for Healthy Early Human Development Yukon receives through the Community Action Program for Children.
- The funding has strengthened Network for Healthy Early Human Development Yukon's ability to deliver the Partners for Children program to Yukon families with young children.
- The Partners for Children program provides a variety of services to promote healthy childhood development, including parenting groups, workshops, trainings, and support for child care centers.
- A new funding request is under review by the department.

### Safe at Home and High Country Inn:

- Our government appreciates the ongoing work done by the Safe at Home Society to end and prevent homelessness in our territory.
- Starting in February 2023, the Safe at Home Society began providing short-term supportive housing at 4051 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, the former Coast High Country Inn, to alleviate the pressures of homelessness faced by vulnerable Yukoners. This is expected to be complete by the end of the week of March 6, 2023.

## Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

### Daily Issues

**(March 9, 2023)**

Health and Social  
Services

---

- The Transfer Payment Agreement was signed on February 15 with budget and expectation to fill 20 units (bachelor suites)
- This agreement is temporary until June 30
- The cost for in 2022-23 is \$476,352 and there is \$340,252 budgeted in 2023-24.
- This initiative aligns with their goal to provide permanent supportive housing at this site in the future.
- We will continue to work with the Safe at Home Society and other partners on new, innovative ways to address homelessness in our community.
- Conversations are ongoing between the Department and Safe at Home Society to explore the supports and services, which may be required for future tenants in these supportive housing units.
- Related information, TAB 62. "Housing and Homelessness"

### Second Opinion Society:

- We recognize the essential contributions of non-governmental organizations to Yukoners and are committed to supporting these partners and the work they do.
- Our government provides funding through Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services to several non-governmental organization who provide variety of important mental health services to Yukoners.
- This previously included the Second Opinion Society whose current Transfer Payment Agreement will expire as of March 31, 2023.
- While the Department of Health and Social Services will not be renewing the current agreement, we have been meeting with the Second Opinion Society to explore future partnership options with a revised programming model.

# Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

### Daily Issues

**(March 9, 2023)**

Health and Social  
Services

---

- We remain committed to working with the Second Opinion Society and to supporting them through the process of developing an updated proposal that ensures appropriate services and programming are made available to residents of the Yukon.
- We continue to work collaboratively with organizations such as Blood Ties Four Directions, Opportunities Yukon, Connective, and the Canadian Mental Health Association – Yukon to provide Yukoners with health and social care.

### Substance Use Health Emergency Funding:

- The Substance Use Health Emergency is a territory-wide challenge that cannot be solved alone, which is why we are working with our partners to coordinate our response.
- As we work with our partners, we are also making significant investments to respond to this crisis.
- In 2021-22, our government provided an initial **\$1M** to launch the Supervised Consumption Site in fall 2022.
- During the 2022-23 fiscal year, our government provided a temporary increase of **\$3.4M** to assist with our response to the Substance Use Health Emergency, which included:
  - \$1.798M for Mental Wellness and Social Supports in response to the Substance Use Health Emergency;
  - \$122K in Mental Wellness bilateral funding;
  - \$397K for new nursing positions within Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services and Community Nursing;
  - \$193K in additional funding for the Supervised Consumption Site;
  - \$856K for Safer Supply; and,
  - \$55K for new Substance Use and Addictions Programs.

# Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

### Daily Issues

**(March 9, 2023)**

Health and Social  
Services

---

- This additional funding for the Substance Use Health Emergency complimented our established and ongoing Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services' funding, which was budgeted as **\$25.3M** during the 2022-23 fiscal year.
- During the 2023-24 fiscal year, we have budgeted **\$25.7M** for Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services. We have also moved to permanently integrated some of the temporary supports introduced during the 2022-23 fiscal year into our routine programming.
- Through this permanent integration of **\$660K** for 6.0 FTEs in Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services, we are ensuring that the Yukon remains prepared to respond to the Substance Use Health Emergency and meet the mental wellness needs of Yukoners moving forward.
- The overall budget for Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services is being used to deliver a variety of programs across our Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services Community Hubs as well as our Whitehorse based programs. This funding is also used to support land-based healing initiatives, support the new Car 867, support an opioid overdose prevention team, make Naloxone available across the Yukon, and to fund several NGO partners, including Blood Ties Four Directions.
- Additionally, we also provide funding to psychiatrists and local physicians who service the Referred Care Clinic, as well as provide medical travel coverage to access some pre-approved out-of-territory mental wellness and substance use services at approved facilities.
- In 2023-24, our government has provided **\$12.2M** to the Yukon Hospital Corporation's construction of a new Mental Wellness Unit (Short Stay Psychiatric Unit / Secure Medical Unit).
- **Additional information, TAB 10. "Substance Use Health Emergency."**

# Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

### Daily Issues

**(March 9, 2023)**

Health and Social  
Services

#### Yukon Dental Program:

- The Yukon Dental Program officially launched on January 4, 2023, providing \$1,300 per year in dental benefits to eligible Yukoners.
- This exciting new program aims to fill gaps in our current programs and provide more Yukoners with access to essential dental care.
- Pharmacare and Extended Health Benefits clients can receive \$600 through the Yukon Dental Program in addition to the \$1,400 available every two years through the Pharmacare and Extended Health Benefits program.
- Yukoners with private dental insurance are not eligible to receive a top up at this time.
- Related information, TAB 29. "Dental."

#### Approved by:



Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

March 9, 2023

[Date approved]



Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

March 9, 2023

[Date approved]

# Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

### Budget

Health and Social  
Services

---

#### Government priority:

- The Government of Yukon is committed to ensuring that Yukoners are supported by an accountable government that is fiscally responsible while investing in targeted measures to support the health and wellbeing of Yukoners.

#### Key messages:

- Our government is committed to ensuring Yukoners have access to the services and supports they need.
- We are providing a responsible and transparent budget that responds to the health and social care priorities of Yukoners.
- We have worked with our health and social care system partners, including the Yukon Hospital Corporation to meet core funding needs and improve access to services and supports.
- Alongside other provincial and territorial governments, we continue to work with the federal government to discuss funding, so that we may advance the Yukon's priorities.

#### Key facts:

- In 2023-24, we have budgeted **\$512.3M** (\$512,302,000) in the Department of Health and Social Services O&M.
  - This is an increase of **\$6.65M** (\$6,654,000) over the 2022-23 Main Estimates and represents an increase of 1.32%.
- In 2023-24, we have budgeted **\$15.9M** (\$15,933,000) for Capital expenditures.
  - This is a decrease of **\$1.7M** (\$1,662,000) over the 2022-23 Main Estimates and represents a **decrease** of **9.45%**.

## Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

### Budget

Health and Social  
Services

- Since 2017-18, the Department of Health and Social Services' O&M budget has increased from **\$373.35M** (\$373,349,000) to **\$512.3M** (\$512,302,000)
  - Between the 2020-21 and 2022-23 fiscal years, a projected total of **\$91.5M** (\$91,468,872) was spent over three years for the COVID-19 response.
- There is **\$55.6M** (\$55,569,000) of funding available in 2023-24 from the federal government through the Canada Health Transfer.
  - The federal government has also provided a one-time top up of \$2.2M through the Canada Health Transfer during the 2022-23 fiscal year.
- We anticipate receiving an additional **\$20.8M** this fiscal year through federal transfers including \$10M through the Territorial Health Investment Fund, \$7.5M through bilateral agreements, and \$3.3M in funding for Proof of Vaccination.

### FTE Summary:

Health and Social Services FTEs – Mains Budgets					
Fiscal Year	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
<b>Total FTE Count</b>	1,413.90	1,419.13	1,526.53	1,677.3	1,573.4
<b>Change from Prior Fiscal Year</b>	<b>61.45</b>	<b>5.23</b>	<b>107.40</b>	<b>63.50</b>	<b>(103.90)</b>

\*(FTE counts between 2017-18 and 2021-22 do not include re-stated positions from EMS)

### Budgeted FTEs:

- During the 2021-22 and 2022-23 fiscal years, FTE changes were required to ensure the department had the capacity to respond effectively and quickly to the challenges of COVID-19.

## Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

### Budget

Health and Social  
Services

---

- As we shift away from the acute stage of the pandemic, we are adjusting our FTE count to reflect our ongoing needs while ensuring we remain responsive to the public health needs of Yukoners.
- In 2023-24, there are **1,573.4 FTEs** in the department compared to **1,677.3 FTEs** in the 2022-23 Main Estimates, inclusive of EMS. There is a decrease of **103.9 FTEs** between 2023-24 and 2022-23.
  - There is a decrease of 144.9 FTEs. This reduction is primarily driven by the transfer of 405 Alexander to Connective and the removal of the 103.4 temporary FTEs introduced in 2022-23.
  - There is also an increase of 41.0 FTEs. This increase is driven by permanently integrating 31.0 front-line, service delivery-oriented FTEs across the department to respond to ongoing and future public health challenges and maintain best practices learned during the COVID-19 response.
- 87.3 FTEs for EMS were transferred from Community Services to Health and Social Services in 2023-24.
- Since the 2017-18 fiscal year, FTE changes have been primarily driven by major initiatives such as:
  - In 2017-18, staffing Sarah Steele and expanding MacDonald Lodge, as well as the Thomson Centre Respite and Reablement Unit.
  - In 2018-19, staffing the first phase of Whistle Bend Place and increasing access to Home Care.
  - In 2019-20, staffing 405 Alexander and the second phase of Whistle Bend Place.
  - In 2021-22, FTE increases were related to the Yukon's response to COVID-19 and our vaccination rollout.

## Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

### Budget

Health and Social  
Services

---

- In 2022-23, there were 103.4 temporary FTEs, including 82.80 for the COVID-19 response.

#### Federal Funding:

- We continue to emphasize the unique needs of northern, rural, and remote areas and the challenges associated with health care service delivery in the territory, including during negotiations on bilateral funding agreements.
- New investments announced by the federal government in early February 2023 are informed by shared health indicators such as:
  - access to primary health care providers;
  - COVID-19 surgery backlogs;
  - net changes to the number of health care providers;
  - wait times for mental health and substance use services;
  - the percentage of youth between the ages of 12 and 25 with access to integrated youth services for mental health and substance use; and,
  - the percentage of Yukoners with a mental disorder who have unmet mental health care needs.
- Additionally, provinces and territories will commit to adopting standards and policies related to personal health information, as well as streamlining foreign credentials for internationally educated health professionals.
  - The Government of Canada's funding offer did not contain any requirements for provinces or territories to adopt a Digital ID.
  - Sharing personal health information is not part of our discussions with the federal government.

## Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

### Budget

Health and Social  
Services

---

- Rules related to the sharing, use and collection of personal health information is set out in the *Health Information Privacy and Management Act*.
- On March 10, 2023, the federal government announced deductions to the Canada Health Transfer for the 2020-21 fiscal year.
- We understand the federal government has identified concerns with private billing for services that are deemed to be insured health services.
- We are carefully reviewing the federal government's concerns and assessing whether there is any impact for the Yukon.

### NGO Agreement Management:

- The Department of Health and Social Services' Social Supports branch provides over **\$16M** of funding to non-government organizations in the territory to deliver services to Yukoners.
  - In 2022-23, we provided **\$13.1M** (\$13,108,990) to non-government organizations to address homelessness.
- In November 2021, the Department of Health and Social Services engaged a contractor to conduct a review of the management of agreements within the Social Supports branch, which identified several key concerns.
- The Office of the Auditor General of Canada report on housing in the Yukon released in May 2022 also included a recommendation to improve the oversight of funding agreements.
- We have made significant efforts to address these issues and improve the management and accountability of non-government organizations, including:
  - establishing a working group to focus on system and process improvements;

## Session Briefing Note

Spring 2023

### Budget

Health and Social  
Services

---

- advancing work to prepare a management methodology and guidebook;
- shifting toward more outcome focused reporting and deliverables; and
- creating an Agreement Manager position dedicated to tracking and managing agreements for Social Services.
- We continue explore additional opportunities to improve reporting requirements for agreements to understand outcomes, including the requirement for logic models and performance measurement frameworks.

### Substance Use Health Emergency Funding:

- The Substance Use Health Emergency is a territory-wide challenge that cannot be solved alone, which is why we are working with our partners to coordinate our response.
- As we work with our partners, we are also making significant investments to respond to this crisis.
- In 2021-22, our government provided an initial **\$1M** to launch the Supervised Consumption Site in fall 2022.
- During the 2022-23 fiscal year, our government provided a temporary increase of **\$3.4M** to assist with our response to the Substance Use Health Emergency, which included:
  - \$1.798M for Mental Wellness and Social Supports in response to the Substance Use Health Emergency;
  - \$122K in Mental Wellness bilateral funding;
  - \$397K for new nursing positions within Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services and Community Nursing;
  - \$193K in additional funding for the Supervised Consumption Site;

## Session Briefing Note

Spring 2023

### Budget

Health and Social  
Services

---

- \$856K for Safer Supply; and,
  - \$55K for new Substance Use and Addictions Programs.
- This additional funding for the Substance Use Health Emergency complimented our established and ongoing Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services' funding, which was budgeted as **\$25.3M** during the 2022-23 fiscal year.
- The second supplementary budget also included an increase of **\$590K** for mental wellness and substance use initiatives. This funding is being used to support initiatives, including:
  - The Mental Wellness Summit Phase Two in September 2022;
  - A three-day on the land gathering with the Nelson Project;
  - Hives for Watson Lake Project;
  - To support Roots of Hope to work with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Wellness Department on suicide prevention training;
  - The Support is Here for You Campaign.
- During the 2023-24 fiscal year, we have budgeted **\$25.7M** for Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services. We have also moved to permanently integrated some of the temporary supports introduced during the 2022-23 fiscal year into our routine programming.
- Through this permanent integration of **\$660K** for 6.0 FTEs in Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services, we are ensuring that the Yukon remains prepared to respond to the Substance Use Health Emergency and meet the mental wellness needs of Yukoners moving forward.
- The overall budget for Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services is being used to deliver a variety of programs across our Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services Community Hubs as well as our Whitehorse based programs. This funding is also used to support land-based healing initiatives, support the new Car 867, support an opioid

## Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

### Budget

Health and Social  
Services

---

overdose prevention team, make Naloxone available across the Yukon, and to fund several NGO partners, including Blood Ties Four Directions.

- Additionally, we also provide funding to psychiatrists and local physicians who service the Referred Care Clinic, as well as provide medical travel coverage to access some pre-approved out-of-territory mental wellness and substance use services at approved facilities.
- In 2023-24, our government has budgeted **\$12.2M** to the Yukon Hospital Corporation's construction of a new Mental Wellness Unit (Short Stay Psychiatric Unit / Secure Medical Unit).

#### **Yukon Hospital Corporation funding:**

- We value our relationship with the Yukon Hospital Corporation, and we continue to ensure that we work collaboratively and in partnership as we support and respond to the health needs of Yukoners.
- Yukon Government continues to fully meet the funding needs of the Yukon Hospital Corporation, and year over year we have provided funding through core and additional TPAs commiserate with the total identified needs of the Yukon Hospital Corporation.
- Throughout the 2021-22 and 2022-23 fiscal years, we have worked with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to meet and exceed all funding requests identified during the Main and supplementary budgetary exercises.
- We understand that we are in unprecedented times as we emerge from the acute COVID crisis, face inflationary pressure and address a worldwide HHR crisis, and to that end and in the spirit of partnership we maintain an ongoing cooperative relationship to anticipate new or emerging pressures.

## Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

### Budget

Health and Social  
Services

---

- During the 2023-24 fiscal year, we budgeted **\$93.64M** (\$93,637,000) for Yukon Hospital Services O&M, as well as **\$12.2M** (\$12,200,000) in Capital expenditures for a combined total of **\$105.84M** (\$105,837,000).
  - This is an increase of **\$4.62M** (\$4,617,000) compared to the 2022-23 fiscal year and represents an increase of **5.19%**.
  - Since the 2017-18 fiscal year, we have increased the Yukon Hospital Services O&M funding from \$70.6M (\$70,592,000) to \$93.64M (\$93,637,000), which is an increase of **32.64%**.
- Between 2020-21 and 2022-23, our government provided a total of **\$16.4M** (\$16,369,868) in additional funding to the Yukon Hospital Corporation in direct response to COVID-19 related pressures.
- In 2022-23, funding for the Mental Wellness Unit (Short Stay Psychiatric Unit) was deferred as the Yukon Hospital Corporation was required to delay construction, so that designs could be updated to address seismic concerns.
  - Our government has included **\$12.2M** in the 2023-24 Main Estimates for this build, which is expected to commence construction this spring.
- While the majority of funding for the Yukon Hospital Corporation is provided through the Yukon Hospital Services O&M and Capital budget, additional funding is also provided through other channels.
- In 2022-23, we budgeted **\$89.02M** (\$89,020,000) in Yukon Hospital Services O&M funding.
  - So far during the 2022-23 fiscal year, we have provided a total of \$97M to the Yukon Hospital Corporation, including O&M and funding through other channels. This funding does not include capital.

# Session Briefing Note

## Budget

# Spring 2023

## Health and Social Services

- As of March 14, 2023, we had provided \$97M (96,558,370) to the Yukon Hospital Corporation in 2022-23, including O&M funding, as well as funding through other Transfer Payment Agreements (see tabled). The additional funding provided through Transfer Payment Agreements has not yet been finalized for the 2022-23 fiscal year, and we anticipate this amount will bring total funding to over \$100M. We also provided \$5.7M in capital funding to the Hospital Corporation.

Core Funding	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Core Agreement Funding	85,555,000	\$88,295,000	\$93,637,000
TPA and other revenue outside core	4,091,762	\$5,409,584	TBD
COVID	7,663,000		N/A
Patient Revenue that flows through HSS	3,477,223	\$2,853,786	TBD
<b>Total Funding and Revenue via HSS</b>	<b>100,786,985</b>	<b>96,558,370</b>	<b>93,637,000</b>
YHC Revenue	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Revenue Outside of HSS	9,011,015	\$9,229,630	TBD
<b>Total YHC Revenue</b>	<b>109,798,000</b>	<b>105,788,000</b>	<b>93,637,000</b>

Approved by:



Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

April 11, 2023

[Date approved]

## Session Briefing Note

**Fall 2022****Daily Issues  
(November 23, 2022)**Health and Social  
Services

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### Media coverage:

- There may be questions about the government's implementation of the *Putting People First* report.
- The YCAO may appear as a witness in the Yukon Legislative Assembly.
- Questions have been raised about hemodialysis in the Yukon.
- There may be interest in the status of the Yukon's diabetes strategy.
- There may be interest in the status of Lodgepole Lane.
- On November 22, 2022, the Yukon Hospital Corporation appeared as a witness in the legislature.

### CFSA Implementation:

- After Bill no. 11 was passed by this Legislative Assembly, the CFSA Implementation Working Group was created to develop the key policies required to implement the CFSA amendments.
- All 14 Yukon First Nations were invited to join the working group, as well as the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate and the Privacy Commissioner who had "observer" status to ensure that we respected children's rights and ATIPP/HIPMA concerns, respectively, during our policy discussions.
- To date, the department has drafted the key program policies required to fully implement the legislative changes to the CFSA in preparation for a come-into-force date on November 30, 2022.
- We also continue to work collaboratively with Yukon First Nations and the federal government at the Trilateral Table to discuss broader child welfare reform including priorities for increased prevention and enhancement initiatives with a focus on the wellbeing of Yukon First Nation children and families.

## Session Briefing Note

**Fall 2022**

### Daily Issues (November 23, 2022)

Health and Social  
Services

- I would like to thank all members of the committee and working group for their incredible dedication and support to successfully implement these legislative changes.

#### Diabetes Strategy:

- On May 19, 2021, the Yukon Legislative Assembly unanimously passed Motion No. 30 committing to develop a Type 1 Diabetes Strategy by September 2022.
- With the consent of all parties, the roll out of the Type 1 Diabetes Strategy was delayed to allow for more thorough engagement with all parties invested in the strategy.
- The T1D Support Network has held interviews and focus groups over the last few months.
- On November 22, 2022, the T1D Support Network held an event to report back on research findings.
- Over the next few months, the needs and solutions identified at this stage will be developed into a Strategy.

#### EHS and Lodgepole Lane Property:

- The Department is aware that the building located at Lot 194 in Porter Creek, also referred to as #2 Lodgepole Lane, has been associated with a number of complaints to Environmental Health Services, the City of Whitehorse Bylaw Services, the RCMP, and the Whitehorse Fire Department for at least ten years.
  - In August 2020, following a joint inspection, the building was declared unfit for human habitation.
- We understand that, despite the various orders from different levels of government to close and/or remediate the building continues to present a health and safety risk.

## Session Briefing Note

Fall 2022

**Daily Issues  
(November 23, 2022)**

Health and Social  
Services

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- Environmental Health Services is not actively working on this file but will continue to work with the City of Whitehorse and the RCMP to address the environmental health concerns regarding the building to eliminate health and safety concerns as the need arises.

### YCAO report:

- Thank you to the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate for submitting this comprehensive report.
- Our government has accepted all the recommendations outlined in the report and is committed to timely and system-wide corrective action to ensure the wellbeing of Yukon children is put first and remains at the centre of our decision-making and actions.
- The Department of Health and Social Services is working closely with the Department of Education to make progress towards the Child and Youth Advocate's advice, as well as the *Safer Schools Action Plan*.
- Family and Children Services is playing an active role in this work including supporting the development of new policies and procedures on prevention, response, and reporting, aiding in the creation of a new inter-agency agreement for the investigation of child abuse, and providing awareness presentations on Duty to Report.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services continues to provide support through counselling programs including long-term counselling, rapid access counselling and prevention programs.

### Hemodialysis:

- There are currently 50 people in the Yukon with chronic kidney disease.
- Ten individuals undergo dialysis treatment at home through either peritoneal dialysis or home hemodialysis.

## Session Briefing Note

Fall 2022

### Daily Issues (November 23, 2022)

Health and Social  
Services

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- BC Renal provides support to Yukoners who need dialysis or kidney transplant.
- Their guidelines do not recommend developing a hemodialysis centre in the Yukon based on the territory's population and the number of Yukoners who would need the service.
- These guidelines recommend establishing a hemodialysis centre for a population of 85,000 with six to eight beds that can service approximately 24 patients. At this time, there are fewer than five individuals requiring this level of support in the Yukon.
- The Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health concluded that independent dialysis such as peritoneal dialysis and home hemodialysis are as effective as hemodialysis provided in a hospital settings.
- The Yukon does not have the advanced health infrastructure to accommodate all dialysis patients and some dialysis patients would still need to travel out-of-territory even if a hemodialysis centre were established in-territory.
- It is important to consider that insufficient patient numbers can result in sub-standard, unsafe, or unsustainable levels of care, and can also result in difficulty recruiting health care providers and maintaining their competency in dialysis support.
- Our medical travel program is available to provide support to eligible Yukoners who need to travel out-of-territory to access dialysis services.
- The medical travel program can provide coverage for scheduled air travel to those admitted to access in-patient dialysis services, and can provide scheduled air travel and the daily medical travel subsidy to those receiving out-patient dialysis services.
- An approved escort can also be provided with scheduled air travel and the daily medical travel subsidy. These supports are available to approved escorts when they travel out-of-territory to receive home hemodialysis

## Session Briefing Note

Fall 2022

### Daily Issues (November 23, 2022)

Health and Social  
Services

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training, so that they can assist family members / dependents upon returning to the Yukon.

- We continue to work closely with BC Renal to monitor this important issue.

#### Putting People First:

- Our government is moving forward with the recommendations and direction proposed in the *Putting People First* report.
- On November 23, 2022, we released the first *Putting People First Annual report*.
  - To date, 70% of the recommendations in the report are operational or in progress;
  - 14 recommendations are operational;
  - 39 recommendations are in progress; and,
  - 23 recommendations are not yet started.
- While many actions can and have been actioned quickly, others will be achieved over a longer period. Many recommendations are tied to the creation of a health authority.
- We are focused on achieving a health and social system that is integrated, collaborative, culturally safe, anti-racist, and puts Yukoners at the center.
- A key step to achieving this is building Health and Wellness Yukon in a way that supports providers and Yukoners alike by breaking down barriers and silos across the system.
- Establishing Health and Wellness Yukon is a foundational step towards addressing the changes that Yukoners have asked for. This work is in its early stages, and we are committed to working with staff, our health system partners, Yukon First Nations, and other stakeholders as this work progresses.
- We are aware that there is an ongoing health human resource crisis, and we are committed to supporting the workforce throughout this work – we

## Session Briefing Note

## Fall 2022

### Daily Issues (November 23, 2022)

Health and Social  
Services

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need and value all the exceptional health and social service providers in the Yukon.

- This transition is about connecting Yukoners to an integrated and person-centered health and social care system, and our care providers will continue to play an important role in this work.
- Related information, TAB 5. “Health and Wellness Yukon (PPF)”

### Yukon Hospital Corporation:

- Our government is committed to working with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to deliver a robust, integrated, and person-centered health care system.
- We recognize our health care system is experiencing challenges and pressures, which is why we are working with Yukon hospitals to address wait times, health human resources, expand access to new and specialist services, implement 1Health, and work towards establishing Health and Wellness Yukon, amongst other shared priorities.
- Our government is providing funding for the new **Mental Health Unit** (formerly Secure Medical Unit). While this project experienced some delays while inflation and further building code requirement needs could be assessed, we continue to work with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to support this project.
- The **First Nations Health Program** is available to provide 24-hour, culturally safe assistance to patients who identify as First Nation, Inuit, or Metis. The program can help connect clients to accommodations, transportation back to communities or within Whitehorse, as well as with navigating hospital services.
- Whitehorse General Hospital is equipped with several sleep rooms, which are available as temporary on-site accommodation options.

# Session Briefing Note

## Fall 2022

### Daily Issues (November 23, 2022)

### Health and Social Services

- As a standard practice, Yukon hospitals do not discharge patients during the night; however, the hospital cannot prevent an individual from leaving the hospital.
- While there is more work to be done, we are pleased to see that our investments and collaborative work with the Yukon Hospital Corporation are leading to reduced wait times and more person-centered care for Yukoners.

**Approved by:**



\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

November 23, 2022

\_\_\_\_\_  
[Date approved]

\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

\_\_\_\_\_  
[Date approved]

## Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

### Psychiatry

Health and Social  
Services

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#### Government priority:

- The Government of Yukon is committed to increasing access to services and wraparound supports for Yukoners.

#### Key messages:

- We are working with key stakeholders to expand access to psychiatric services in the Yukon.
- We have increased the number of resident psychiatrists in the territory to provide more care to Yukoners.
- We continue to work with psychiatrists and the Yukon Hospital Corporation to help clients get the most appropriate and timely care.

#### Key facts:

- There are 3 full-time psychiatrists and 1 resident psychiatrist in the Yukon, along with 1 child psychiatrist.
- There is approximately a two to four week wait time for a client to see a Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services psychiatrist following a referral from the Referred Care Clinic.
- As of August 1, 2022, there are less than five consults waiting to be scheduled or in the triage process to see a Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services psychiatrist.
- As of August 4, 2022, the average wait time to access private psychiatry in the Yukon is 13 weeks for non-urgent consults. More urgent consults are triaged to be seen earlier.
- As of August 4, 2022, there are 40 people on the Summit Health waitlist to see a psychiatrist, and seven people waiting to be triaged.
- Full-time and on-call services are provided at the Whitehorse General Hospital 365 days per year, 24 hours a day.

## **Session Briefing Note**

**Spring 2023**

### **Psychiatry**

Health and Social  
Services

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#### **Accessing Psychiatry:**

- Referrals for psychiatric services can be made through an individual's general practitioner or Nurse Practitioner, or by a physician through the Emergency Department.
- Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services triages psychiatric care for its clients based on a clinical assessment and provides access to a psychiatrist for individuals with serious and persistent illness that are part of the Psychiatric Outreach Program or Referred Care Clinic.
- High priority clients that are referred through Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services who require wraparound supports are prioritized and every effort will be made to see clients with acute psychiatric concerns within a two-week period.
  - During the two-week wait time, intensive outreach and mental health nursing supports are provided.
- Private psychiatrists set their own schedules and determine how many clients to take on at a time.
- Our government continues to work with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and other community partners to develop a new Mental Wellness Unit at Whitehorse General Hospital.

#### **ECT and Ketamine:**

- Our government understands the importance of providing psychiatric treatment options.

## Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

### Psychiatry

Health and Social  
Services

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- Health Canada has become aware of an increased interest in the off-label use of ketamine for the treatment of different conditions, such as mental illnesses, utilizing various formulations, including compounded products. The risks and benefits of ketamine used for off-label conditions have not been assessed by Health Canada.
- There are clinical trials underway to further characterize the safety and efficacy of ketamine for various therapeutic uses.
- Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT) is a treatment for severe mental illness which involves brief electrical stimulation of the brain.
- Our government will continue to work closely with our partners, including psychiatrists, to continue to offer Yukoners psychiatric treatment options and wraparound supports.

**Approved by:**



\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

\_\_\_\_\_  
February 2, 2023

[Date approved]

## Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

### Psychiatry

Health and Social  
Services

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## **Session Briefing Note**

## **Spring 2023**

### **Psychiatry**

Health and Social  
Services

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## Session Briefing Note

Spring 2023

### Psychiatry

Health and Social  
Services

#### ECT and Ketamine:

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- There are clinical trials underway to further characterize the safety and efficacy of ketamine for various therapeutic uses.
- While ketamine is not eligible for coverage in the Yukon, we will continue to work with Health Canada to review new and emerging research on its use for the treatment of certain conditions.
- Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT) is a treatment for severe mental illness which involves brief electrical stimulation of the brain.
- Our government will continue to work closely with our partners, including psychiatrists, to continue to offer Yukoners psychiatric treatment options and wraparound supports.

#### Approved by:



Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

February 27, 2023

[Date approved]

**Session Briefing Note****Fall 2022****Psychiatry**Health and Social  
Services

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**Government priority:**

- The Government of Yukon is committed to increasing access to services and wrap-around supports for Yukoners.

**Key messages:**

- We are working with key stakeholders to expand access to psychiatric services in the Yukon.
- We have increased the number of resident psychiatrists in the territory to provide more care to Yukoners.
- We continue to work with psychiatrists and the Yukon Hospital Corporation to help clients get the most appropriate and timely care.

**Key facts:**

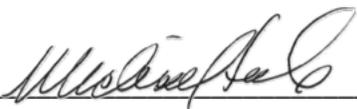
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**Session Briefing Note****Fall 2022****Psychiatry**Health and Social  
Services

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- High priority clients that are referred through Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services who require wrap around supports are prioritized and every effort will be made to see clients with acute psychiatric concerns within a two-week period.
  - During the two-week wait time, intensive outreach and mental health nursing supports are provided.
- Private psychiatrists set their own schedules and determine how many clients to take on at a time.
- Our government continues to work with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and other community partners to develop a new Mental Health Unit at the Whitehorse General Hospital.

**Approved by:**

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Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

August 16, 2022

[Date approved]

## Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

### Hospital Corporation

Health and Social  
Services

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#### Government priority:

- The Government of Yukon is committed to working with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to meet the needs of Yukoners through the Yukon's three hospitals, and to increasing access to timely, safe, quality, and culturally safe services.

#### Key messages:

- The Government of Yukon works with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to ensure that core funding needs are met.
- We will continue to work with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to identify future funding needs and ensure we are providing the services and supports Yukoners need to access safe and excellent hospital care.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation is an important partner as we move forward with the direction laid out in the *Putting People First* report.
- Yukon hospitals are identifying and eliminating systemic barriers to care; building competency and capacity at all levels; diversifying the workforce and leadership; and continuously assessing policy, programs and services to support equity, diversity and inclusion.
- Yukon Hospitals are committed to Truth and Reconciliation and undertaking Indigenization initiatives.
- In an effort to better coordinate and collaborate, the Department of Health and Social Services and the Yukon Hospital Corporation are holding regular joint executive meetings.

## Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

### Hospital Corporation

Health and Social  
Services

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#### Key facts:

- During the 2023-24 fiscal year, we budgeted **\$93.64M** (\$93,637,000) for Yukon Hospital Services O&M funding.
- During the 2023-24 fiscal year, we budgeted **\$12.2M** (\$12,200,000) in capital funding for Yukon Hospital Services.
- Between 2015-16 and 2023-24, the Yukon Hospital Services O&M budget increased from **\$63.64M** to **\$93.64M**, which is an increase of **48.2%**. This funding increase has supported the hospital's core funding needs, as well as the development of new programs and services.

#### Budgeted positions:

- As of December 31, 2022, there were 500.0 FTEs within the Yukon Hospital Corporation, including:
  - 444.0 FTEs at the Whitehorse General Hospital.
  - 34.0 FTEs at the Watson Lake Community Hospital.
  - 22.0 FTEs at the Dawson City Community Hospital.

#### COVID-19:

- The Yukon Hospital Corporation works with the Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Department of Health and Social Services to plan and respond to COVID-19.
- Surge capacity and bed availability levels in Yukon hospitals are closely monitored.
- When necessary, human resources are prioritized to ensure access to care and minimize service interruptions.
- Control measures are in place such as pre-appointment screening, on-site screening, and maintaining physical distancing where possible.

## Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

### Hospital Corporation

Health and Social  
Services

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#### Discharges:

- As a standard practice, Yukon hospitals do not discharge patients during the night; however, the hospital cannot prevent an individual from leaving outside of daytime hours.
- In some cases, individuals who arrive by Medevac are assessed at the Emergency Department and released.
  - Patients who are receiving care in the Emergency Department are released once their care needs are complete, this can happen at any hour of the day.
  - Efforts are made to put discharge plans in place to support the ongoing care needs of the patient however, the amount of time the team has to complete these tasks are hours as opposed to inpatient discharge plans which take days to put in place.
  - During daytime hours more services are available to support on short notice.
  - The First Nations Health Program is available to assist patients on a 24-hour basis and do all they can to help support discharge planning from the Emergency Department.
- Several supports are available to patients who may require assistance when preparing to leave the hospital:
  - The First Nations Health Program provides 24-hour, culturally safe assistance to patients who identify as First Nation, Inuit, or Métis, including by supporting clients to access transportation back to their community, accommodation, and assistance with navigating hospital services.
  - Whitehorse General Hospital is equipped with a number of sleep rooms to provide on-site accommodations.

## Session Briefing Note

Spring 2023

### Hospital Corporation

Health and Social  
Services

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- Our government is funding the United Way to operate the 211 service, which is available to assist Yukoners to connect with programs and available local services such as shelters and accommodation.
- The department and the Yukon Hospital Corporation have recently started a quality improvement initiative with BC Patient Safety and Quality Council focused on improving care transitions between hospital, home and community. In the 2023-24 Main Estimates, we have budgeted **\$40K** (\$40,000) to support this **Bridge to Home** initiative.
- Our government has established a Care Coordination Unit that will work to provide wraparound supports to individual who need to leave their home communities to access medical services.
- We are working to explore opportunities to establish medical travel residences in Whitehorse.

#### Mental Wellness Unit:

- Between 2019-20 and 2023-24, we have budgeted **\$24.8M** (\$24,743,908) to build a new Mental Wellness Unit at Whitehorse General Hospital.
  - In the 2023-24 Main Estimates, we have budgeted **\$12.2M** (\$12,200,000) for capital for the Mental Wellness Unit.
  - A total of **\$10M** (\$9,990,000) of the project's overall funding is recoverable through the Canada Infrastructure Program's COVID-19 Resilience program.
- We have signed an agreement with the Yukon Hospital Corporation, which will provide funding to the hospital to tender and begin construction of the Unit.

## Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

### Hospital Corporation

Health and Social  
Services

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- Timelines for construction and completion were delayed due to factors such as changes in building code requirements, which required the Yukon Hospital Corporation to complete new detailed design work. This work is now complete.
- Construction is anticipated to begin in spring 2023.

#### Staffing:

- Yukon hospitals are committed to maintaining safe and quality care with minimal service disruptions in an environment with a local, national and global health care provider shortage.
- Hospital staff continue to deliver excellent patient care and their efforts are ensuring that Yukoners have access to hospital services.
- Yukon hospitals are working hard to employ innovative solutions to ensure staffing models are well planned and sustainable.
- Contingency plans have been developed to deal with staffing shortages at all three hospitals and long-term recruitment strategies are underway to address shortages.
- We are working with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and Yukon University to develop recruitment, retention, and workforce development strategies.
- Short-term recruitment strategies have been implemented such as the use of agency nurses, incentive programs, accommodation supports, and referral bonuses for existing employees.
- As of December 31, 2022, the Yukon Hospital Corporation is experiencing a 7% vacancy rate for full and part-time positions.
- As of December 31, 2022, there were 24.5 FTE nursing vacancies in Yukon hospitals. Vacancies do not mean shifts are going unfilled.

# Session Briefing Note

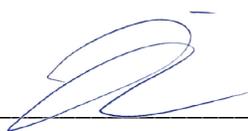
# Spring 2023

## Hospital Corporation

Health and Social  
Services

- The Yukon Hospital Corporation has never had to mandate an employee to work at the Watson Lake or Dawson City Community Hospitals.
- When staffing shortages may occur, the hospital will implement several mitigating actions, which might include a call out to permanent and casual employees, the use of agency nurses, moving staff around departments, or augmenting teams with other nursing supports.

**Approved by:**



Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

February 27, 2023

[Date approved]

# Session Briefing Note

## Hospital Corporation

Spring 2023  
Health and Social  
Services

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### Government priority:

- The Government of Yukon is committed to working with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to meet the needs of Yukoners through the Yukon's three hospitals, and to increasing access to timely, safe, quality, and culturally safe services.

### Key messages:

- The Government of Yukon works with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to ensure that core funding needs are met.
- We will continue to work with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to identify future funding needs and ensure we are providing the services and supports Yukoners need to access safe and excellent hospital care.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation is an important partner as we move forward with the direction laid out in the *Putting People First* report.
- Yukon hospitals are identifying and eliminating systemic barriers to care; building competency and capacity at all levels; diversifying the workforce and leadership; and continuously assessing policy, programs and services to support equity, diversity and inclusion.
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## Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

### Hospital Corporation

Health and Social  
Services

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- Between 2015-16 and 2023-24, the Yukon Hospital Services O&M budget increased from **\$63.20M** to **\$93.64M**, which is an increase of **48.2%**. This funding increase has supported the hospital's core funding needs, as well as the development of new programs and services.

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  - 22.0 FTEs at the Dawson City Community Hospital.

#### COVID-19:

- The Yukon Hospital Corporation works with the Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Department of Health and Social Services to plan and respond to COVID-19.
- Surge capacity and bed availability levels in Yukon hospitals are closely monitored.
- When necessary, human resources are prioritized to ensure access to care and minimize service interruptions.
- Control measures are in place such as pre-appointment screening, on-site screening, and maintaining physical distancing where possible.

## **Session Briefing Note**

## **Spring 2023**

### **Hospital Corporation**

Health and Social  
Services

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#### **Discharges:**

- As a standard practice, Yukon hospitals do not discharge patients during the night; however, the hospital cannot prevent an individual from leaving outside of daytime hours.
- In some cases, individuals who arrive by Medevac are assessed at the Emergency Department and released.
  - Patients who are receiving care in the Emergency Department are released once their care needs are complete, this can happen at any hour of the day.
  - Efforts are made to put discharge plans in place to support the ongoing care needs of the patient however, the amount of time the team has to complete these tasks are hours as opposed to inpatient discharge plans which take days to put in place.
  - During daytime hours more services are available to support on short notice.
  - The First Nations Health Program is available to assist patients on a 24-hour basis and do all they can to help support discharge planning from the Emergency Department.
- Several supports are available to patients who may require assistance when preparing to leave the hospital:
  - The First Nations Health Program provides 24-hour, culturally safe assistance to patients who identify as First Nation, Inuit, or Métis, including by supporting clients to access transportation back to their community, accommodation, and assistance with navigating hospital services.
  - Whitehorse General Hospital is equipped with a number of sleep rooms to provide on-site accommodations.

## Session Briefing Note

## Spring 2023

### Hospital Corporation

Health and Social  
Services

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- Our government is funding the United Way to operate the 211 service, which is available to assist Yukoners to connect with programs and available local services such as shelters and accommodation.
- The department and the Yukon Hospital Corporation have recently started a quality improvement initiative with BC Patient Safety and Quality Council focused on improving care transitions between hospital, home and community. In the 2023-24 Main Estimates, we have budgeted **\$40K** (\$40,000) to support this **Bridge to Home** initiative.
- Our government has established a Care Coordination Unit that will work to provide wraparound supports to individual who need to leave their home communities to access medical services.
- We are working to explore opportunities to establish medical travel residences in Whitehorse.

### Mental Wellness Unit:

- Between 2019-20 and 2023-24, we have budgeted **\$24.8M** (\$24,743,908) to build a new Mental Wellness Unit at Whitehorse General Hospital.
  - In the 2023-24 Main Estimates, we have budgeted **\$12.2M** (\$12,200,000) for capital for the Mental Wellness Unit.
  - A total of **\$10M** (\$9,990,000) of the project's overall funding is recoverable through the Canada Infrastructure Program's COVID-19 Resilience program.
- We have signed an agreement with the Yukon Hospital Corporation, which will provide funding to the hospital to tender and begin construction of the Unit.

## Session Briefing Note

Spring 2023

### Hospital Corporation

Health and Social  
Services

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- Timelines for construction and completion were delayed due to factors such as changes in building code requirements, which required the Yukon Hospital Corporation to complete new detailed design work. This work is now complete.
- Construction is anticipated to begin in spring 2023.

#### Hospital Staffing:

- Yukon hospitals are committed to maintaining safe and quality care with minimal service disruptions in an environment with a local, national and global health care provider shortage.
- Hospital staff continue to deliver excellent patient care and their efforts are ensuring that Yukoners have access to hospital services.
- The Canadian healthcare system is facing a shortage of technical and specialized positions, including nurses. Yukon Hospitals is also dealing with a number of vacancies in our hospital system.
- A vacancy is defined as a regular, indeterminate position (permanent) that is not filled by a regular, indeterminate (permanent) employee – whether or not filled temporarily. The Yukon Hospital Corporation tracks regular indeterminate vacancies because it ensures our hospitals focus on our long-term needs.
- Currently there are 24 nursing vacancies through our three hospital sites with a nursing vacancy rate of 8.4%.
  - 16 at Whitehorse General Hospital;
  - 2 at Dawson City Community Hospital;
  - 6 at the Watson Lake Community Hospital.
- The majority of the vacant positions noted above are being filled by temporary employees, or where that is not possible, with short-term agency nursing staff. These means that just because there is a vacancy,

## Session Briefing Note

Spring 2023

### Hospital Corporation

Health and Social  
Services

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it does not necessarily mean the shift goes unfilled. A reported vacancy does not necessarily mean short-term needs are not met.

- A greater number of positions are posted on the Yukon Hospitals website because they also include casual-on-call opportunities, temporary (term) positions, or new additional positions.
- There is no single strategy that will solve the recruitment and retention challenges that exist for the Yukon Hospital Corporation and a multi-faceted approach is required in order to continue to offer current services and retain employees.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation has never had to mandate an employee to work at the Watson Lake or Dawson City Community Hospitals.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation is working with the department, Yukon University, and the Yukon Registered Nurses Association to develop strategies and support initiatives to bring qualified healthcare professionals to the Yukon, and to support Yukoners to grow into healthcare careers.
  - These include recruitment campaigns, incentives, and mentorship opportunities to grow current staff.

#### Hospital Staff Survey:

- The Yukon Hospital Corporation recently put out an Employee Engagement Survey, which closed in late-February 2023.
- Prior to this, the last survey was conducted in August and September 2020. Gaps in 2021 and 2022 were due to COVID-19 related pressures.
- The goal of the survey is to hear from employees and identify opportunities for improvement at the departmental and organizational level.

## Session Briefing Note

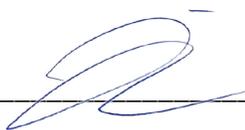
### Hospital Corporation

Spring 2023  
Health and Social  
Services

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- The survey provides overarching feelings from employees that is then used to work across the organization to engage staff about improvements.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation has traditionally not put these survey results on the public website.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation is currently reviewing this years survey results, and developing a plan to communicate and engage staff with the results.

Approved by:



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Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

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March 29, 2023

[Date approved]

## Session Briefing Note

### Hospital Corporation

Health and Social  
Services

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#### Government priority:

- The Government of Yukon is committed to supporting Yukoners to lead healthy, happy lives.

#### Key messages:

- The Government of Yukon works with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to ensure that core funding needs are met.
- We will continue to work with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to identify future funding needs and ensure we are providing the services and supports Yukoners need to access safe and excellent hospital care.
- The Yukon Hospital Corporation is an important partner as we move forward with the direction laid out in the *Putting People First* report.
- Yukon hospitals are identifying and eliminating systemic barriers to care; building competency and capacity at all levels; diversifying the workforce and leadership; and continuously assessing policy, programs and services to support equity, diversity and inclusion.
- In an effort to better coordinate and collaborate, the Department of Health and Social Services and the Yukon Hospital Corporation are holding regular joint executive meetings.

#### Key facts:

- This fiscal year, we invested **\$88.3M** (\$88,295,000) for Yukon Hospital Services O&M funding.
- This fiscal year, we invested **\$11.8M** (\$11,800,000) in capital funding for Yukon Hospital Services.

## Session Briefing Note

Fall 2022

### Hospital Corporation

Health and Social  
Services

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- Between 2015-16 and 2022-23, the Yukon Hospital Services O&M budget has increased by 39.7% of which 17% is for new programs and services.
- The 2018-2022 strategic directions for Yukon hospitals are:
  - Provide excellent patient care.
  - Cultivate and environment of passion and engaged people.
  - Build robust and sustainable systems that advance and support care.
  - Collaborate with health system partners.

#### **Budgeted positions:**

- There are 476.0 FTEs within the Yukon Hospital Corporation, including:
  - 429.0 FTEs at the Whitehorse General Hospital.
  - 25.0 FTEs at the Watson Lake Community Hospital.
  - 22.0 FTEs at the Dawson City Community Hospital.

#### **COVID-19:**

- The Yukon Hospital Corporation works with the Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Department of Health and Social Services to plan and respond to COVID-19.
- Surge capacity and bed availability levels in Yukon hospitals are closely monitored.
- When necessary, human resources are prioritized to ensure access to care and minimize service interruptions.
- Control measures are in place such as pre-appointment screening, on-site screening, maintaining physical distancing, and visitor restrictions.

## Session Briefing Note

### Hospital Corporation

Health and Social  
Services

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#### Mental Health Unit:

- Between 2021-22 and 2023-24, we are investing \$17.5M (\$17,500,000) to build a new Mental Health Unit at Whitehorse General Hospital.
- We have signed an agreement with the Yukon Hospital Corporation, which will provide funding to the hospital to tender and begin construction of the Unit.
- Construction on the Unit is scheduled to begin in late 2022 or early 2023. The Yukon Hospital Corporation and the Department of Health and Social Services are assessing the impacts of inflation and cost escalation that exist in the current marketplace.
- An assessment of new building code requirements was completed and detailed design work began last winter.
- In fall 2021, the Yukon Hospital Corporation tendered and awarded a contract to Thinkspace Architecture as the facility design consultants. Detailed design work started in early winter 2021 and continued through summer and fall.
- In fall 2021, a tender was awarded to Unitech Construction Management as a construction manager.

#### Staffing:

- Yukon hospitals are working hard to employ innovative solutions to ensure staffing models are well planned and sustainable.
- There is currently a national and global shortage of health care providers.
- Contingency plans have been developed to deal with staffing shortages at all three hospitals.

**Session Briefing Note**

**Fall 2022**

**Hospital Corporation**

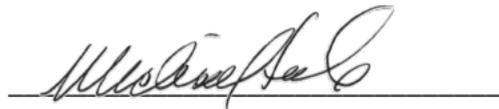
Health and Social  
Services

- Long-term recruitment strategies are underway to address shortages.
- We are working with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to develop a joint recruitment strategy.
- Short-term recruitment strategies have been implemented such as the use of agency nurses, incentive programs, accommodation supports, and referral bonuses for existing employees.

**Strategic plan:**

- Development of the 2022-2027 Strategic Plan is underway and expected to be published and available this fall.
- A final plan is based on the input and feedback of Yukoners.
- As part of the Yukon Hospital Corporation’s commitment to Indigenizing this process, a team was engaged to ensure that a deep knowledge and understanding of Yukon and Yukon First Nations informed this work.

**Approved by:**



Deputy Minister, Health and Social Services

August 16, 2022

[Date approved]